

**Proposed Outdoor Classroom at Westmoor Park  
119 Flagg Road, West Hartford**

***Proposal:***

The Department of Leisure Services has identified the need for a three-season, open-air outdoor teaching space at Westmoor Park, which could be used as a classroom and shelter. Currently, Westmoor Park attracts approximately 100,000 visitors every year. Programs include a popular summer camp with over 900 summer campers; a school-based EcoVenture program that serves over 3,000 West Hartford school children with in-depth, curriculum-based programming; and other popular classes for residents of all ages. On any given day, from April through November, there could be between 100-300 West Hartford residents engaged in environmental education and outdoor activities at Westmoor Park. At this time, the park has limited space for sheltered use during inclement weather, or covered shade during summer programs.

***Design:***

As the Town's premier center for environmental and agricultural education, the facility is committed to maintaining the integrity of its programs and the beauty of the Park. The proposed ADA-accessible structure would blend easily with Westmoor Park's rustic aesthetic. The building would be an open-sided structure made of natural materials. It would be a timber framed structure with a maximum of footprint of 30 ft wide and 60 ft long. Depending on funding, the size could be reduced. The structure materials would be pre-manufactured off-site and delivered to the site for quick installation. It would accommodate approximately 75 campers/students plus their counselors/teachers. No sound amplification is proposed. Limited ceiling mounted and security lighting will be provided. It will be handicapped accessible from the existing parking lot.

The site plans note several "potential" elements. These are items that may be built if funding becomes available.

***Impact on Facility Operations:***

The proposed building's wide-open design would support educational programming as well as provide shelter from the elements. The space would improve the parks ADA accessibility. Because the park is only open from dawn to dusk, an outdoor classroom space would only be utilized during park hours and would sustain current programs. No additional traffic to the park would be expected.

***Location:***

The building site is proposed to be at the south end of the Games Field, tucked in the edge of the tree nursery and approximately 117 ft north of the southern property line. A wooded buffer exists along Westmoor's southern property line adjacent to homes along Pioneer Drive. The area is generally level so only a small amount of grading would be required. Approximately 20 trees would be removed but these are already planned to be removed as they are diseased and dying.

The location was chosen for its proximity to the perimeter access drive, level ground and easy access for educational programming. The choice was also based on community outreach. On Monday, August 26, 2019, Westmoor Park staff held a community meeting with the neighbors directly abutting the property to introduce the idea and solicit feedback. Of the neighbors who attended, the overall response was positive. A few residents had questions about the location and security. As a result of the community comments, staff and designers concluded that the proposed location should be at the end of the Games Field. This location has the following features:

- a) a fairly flat, low grade to allow for ease of ADA accessibility
- b) low impact on the existing lawn
- c) would not block neighbor views
- d) not on wetland soil
- e) does not require the removal of any vegetation of conservation interest

Park staff will continue to communicate with the closest neighbors regarding the location, and solicit feedback and suggestions.

***Construction Sequence:***

1. Clear vegetation	3 days
2. Install erosion controls	1 day
3. Earthwork	1 week
4. Concrete foundations and floor	2 weeks
5. Utilities	1 week
6. Install structure	2 weeks
7. Restoration	2 weeks

***Construction Start:***

The start date will be dependent on funding, but earliest would be spring of 2020.

***Project Funding:***

Project funds would come from a combination of revenue from the annual Feast on the Farm fundraising dinner and a focused capital campaign. As Westmoor Park is not tax funded, the Outdoor Classroom would be independent of town financing and tax dollars.